Ramadan Lesson Plan
Grade Level: K-5

Overview: This lesson plan is intended to give students a basic understanding of Ramadan {RAH-muh-dahn}, the month-long Islamic fasting holiday that culminates in Eid al-Fitr {EED ahl-FIT-er}. Along the way, students will also gain some insight into more general aspects of the Islamic faith.

Background Information: There are various tidbits you can offer, depending on grade level and what specific standards you are trying to meet. Here are a few ideas:

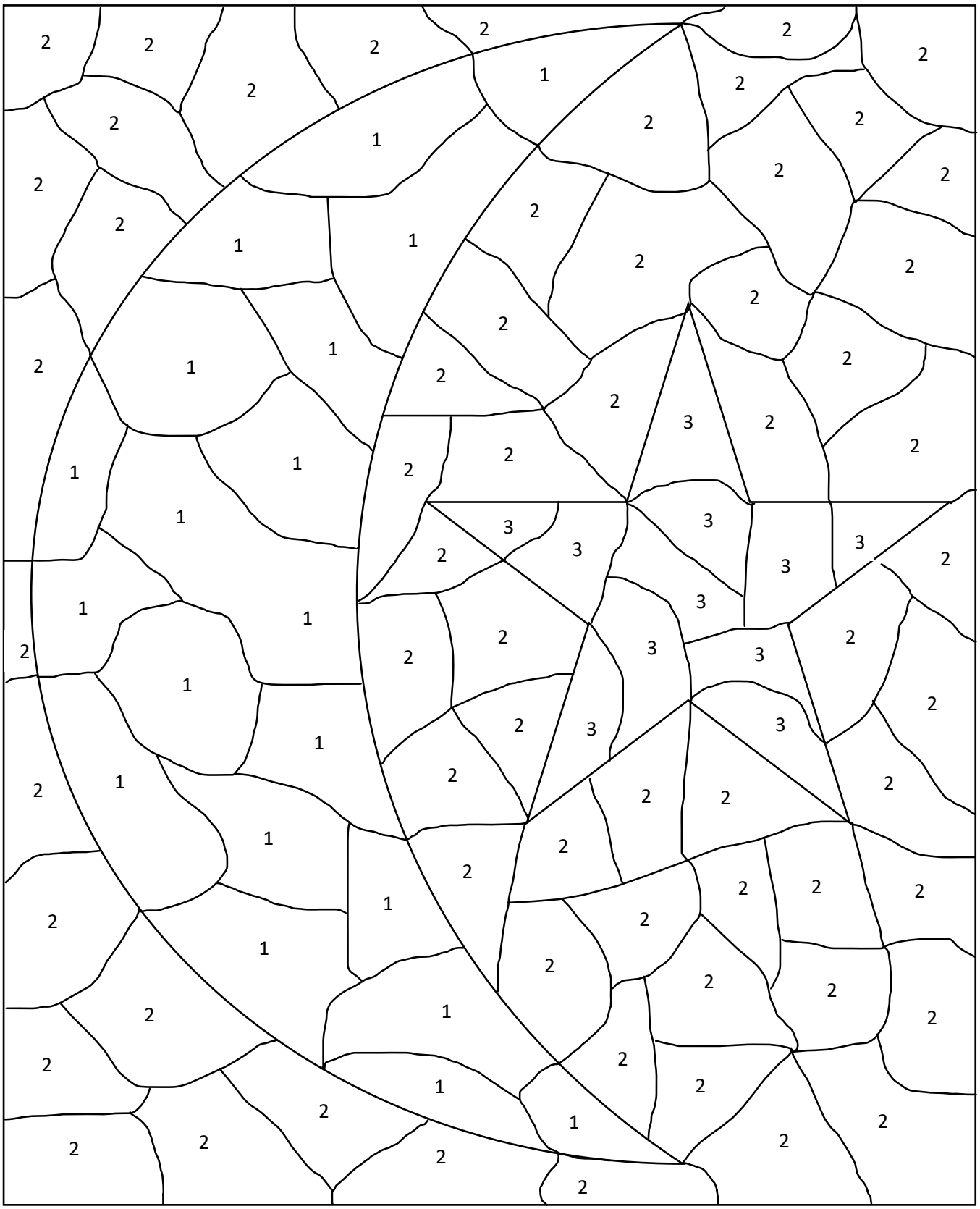
- Islam, the 2nd largest religion in the world, was started by Muhammad, a well-respected merchant-turned-prophet from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Those who follow Islam are called Muslims, and they consider Muhammad to be the final prophet in a long line of prophets. Students should be able to identify the Arabian Peninsula on a world map.
- The sacred text for Muslims is the Qur'an, which is revered as a revelation from God. The Arabic word for God is Allah.
- Muslims gather for prayers at worship centers called mosques. Most mosques have at least one dome and at least one tower, called a minaret. Devout Muslims pray five times a day at designated times. The prayer calls are broadcast from the minaret. Share images of mosques from around the world or from your own community.

Ramadan Story
The word "Ramadan" refers both to the name of the month on the Islamic calendar *and* to the month-long fasting period. This particular month was chosen because it was during this month that Muhammad received the first revelations from Allah. The story included in this lesson plans explains a bit about Muhammad and. Four, full-color illustrations and a few in-story questions are included. Additional thought questions can be found on the last page.

Craft #1: Moon/Star Mosaic-by-Number
Although there have been times throughout history when it was OK, it is currently considered unacceptable to depict the Prophet Muhammad (or any other Islamic prophet, for that matter). For this reason, mosques are generally decorated with colorful flowers, geometric designs, and calligraphy. Also, the crescent moon has become an unofficial symbol of Islam, and each new month (including Ramadan) begins with the sighting of the new moon.

Materials Needed: one mosaic-by-number template and at least three different colored crayons/markers/colored pencils per student.

Process: Have the students use one color for all the #1 spaces, another color for all the #2 spaces, and a third color for all the #3 spaces.


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Craft #2: Kaaba

One of the most sacred sites in Islam is the Kaaba {KAH-uh-buh}, a large cube-shaped structure that sits in the courtyard of Islam's most revered mosque in Mecca. The cube is generally covered with a gold-decorated black cloth.

Materials: One Kaaba template per student, scissors, tape. Gold markers or glue and gold glitter are optional.

Instructions: Cut around the outside of the template. Fold along the solid lines to form a cube. Tape the cube together using the tabs. Decorate the outside of the cube with gold-colored supplies.



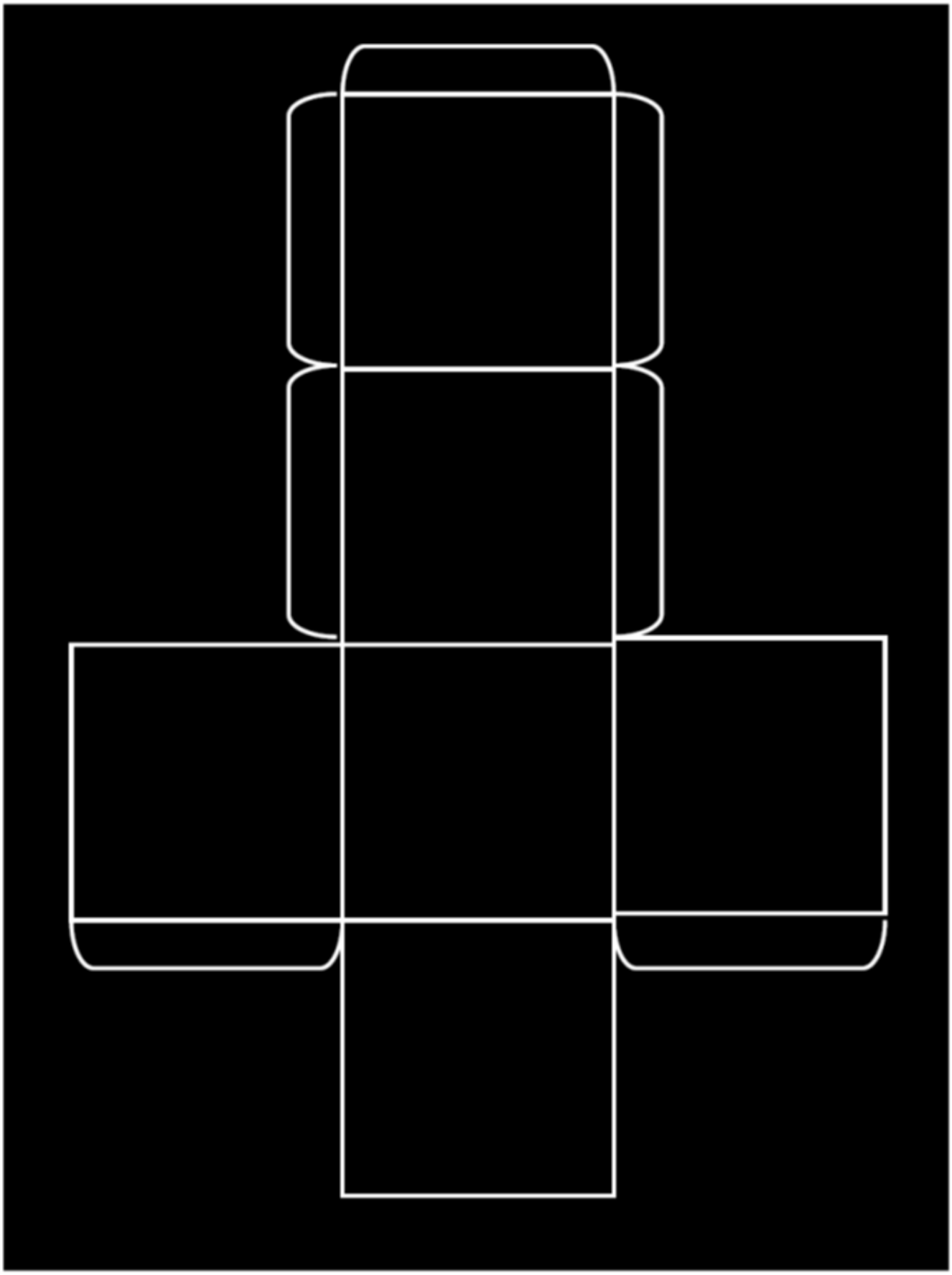
Activity: Taste of Islam

Every faith tradition has meaningful foods – foods that are eaten at holidays, foods that are typical of a particular region, and foods that are used as object lessons by faith leaders, teachers, and gurus. That food, in Islam, is the date, a small fruit harvested from date palms, which are found throughout the Middle East.



Dates are mentioned many times in the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad loved to eat dates, and Muslims around the world break their daily Ramadan fast by drinking a bit of water and eating a few dates. Dates are also highly nutritious – a source of vitamins, fiber, protein, and natural sugars.

Some kids love dates; others don't like them at all; and some have never tried them! We recommend buying a small container and cutting them up, so that each student can have a small taste, if they want one. There will almost certainly be students who will offer to eat any/all leftovers. 😊



Muhammad Becomes a Prophet

Everyone said the little boy named Muhammad was destined for greatness. His father had died before he was born, but his mother, Aminah, loved him very much and was sure he was very special. When Muhammad was six years old, Aminah and Muhammad took a trip from their hometown of Mecca to the city of Yathrib. For eleven days, they rode on camels across the hot, desert sands. They were part of a caravan that carried goods across the peninsula, and they passed the time listening to the merchants tell incredible stories about their various adventures.

When they finally arrived in Yathrib, Aminah's family greeted them warmly. Muhammad had a wonderful time meeting his aunts and uncles and playing with his cousins. They had a pool, so they taught Muhammad how to swim. And when they got tired of swimming, they taught Muhammad how to fly a kite. It was the best visit ever!

Sadly, tragedy struck on the way back to Mecca. Muhammad's mother got sick, and there was nothing they could do to save her. After she died, Muhammad, with the help of his nanny and his grandfather, eventually made it back home. But, as you might imagine, he was horribly sad about his mother's death. Muhammad's grandfather took him in. They had a very special bond and spent most of their days together at the holiest site in Mecca, a temple called the Kaaba {KAH-buh}. People would come from miles around to pray to the statues displayed in the temple and to drink from the sacred well, which Muhammad's grandfather had discovered. When they weren't at the Kaaba, they could be found walking hand-in-hand through the streets of Mecca enjoying each other's company.

This picture shows Muhammad as a young boy with his grandfather. Do you have any special memories of your grandparents or of visiting any of your relatives?



It was a wonderful time in Muhammad's life, but his grandfather was quite old, and he died a couple of years later. This time, Muhammad was taken in by his aunt and uncle. They, too, loved Muhammad like their own son. Despite all the sadness in his life, Muhammad continued to thrive. Sometimes, he joined his uncle on caravan routes, eventually becoming a successful merchant of his own. In fact, Muhammad was widely known as al-Amin {ahl-ah-MEEN}, which means "One Who Is Honest and Truthful."

Have you ever known someone who was really honest and truthful?

This picture shows an image of a caravan. Back then, in that part of the world, merchants would travel in groups – usually on camels – buying and selling things like spices, cloth, and medicines.



One day, a rich female merchant, name Khadijah {kah-dee-juh}, hired Muhammad to take some of her goods across the desert to Syria. The trip was very successful and, soon after, they decided to marry. Khadijah and Muhammad were extremely happy together. They had four daughters of their own, but they regularly welcomed and befriended relatives and business partners from around the region. They were known for their kind-hearted generosity, and their home was filled with love, which they readily extended to any, and all, visitors.

Have you ever known a family that was really loving and welcoming?

Over time, Muhammad's reputation for being honest and truthful helped him become an important leader in the Meccan community, but only a few of his closest family members knew about the visions. At first, the visions came to Muhammad while he was sleeping. Somehow, they seemed brighter and more powerful than regular dreams. And afterwards, Muhammad would sometimes feel the need to go off by himself. In fact, there was a cave, located on the side of a mountain just outside of Mecca, that offered the perfect place for these retreats. Being removed from the hustle and bustle of life in Mecca gave Muhammad the peace and quiet he needed to connect with God and contemplate these powerful events. This went on for a few years, and Muhammad was now 40 years old. That's when the really miraculous incident happened.

Have you ever been in a cave before? Would you like to be in a cave alone?

On this occasion, near the end of the month of Ramadan, an angel of God appeared to Muhammad in the cave. The angel wanted Muhammad to recite a message, but Muhammad had no idea what the message was or why he

was supposed to say it. Then, the angel held Muhammad in an overpowering embrace and repeated the request to recite. The whole thing was so frightening and confusing that Muhammad ran out of the cave and down the mountainside. But, when he was halfway home, the angel appeared in the heavens above him, filling the sky with light, and said, “Oh, Muhammad, you are the messenger of God, and I am the angel, Gabriel.”

This picture shows one artist’s idea of what an angel might look like. If you drew an angel, what would it look like? Would it look similar to this one or different?



The appearance of the angel, Gabriel, to Muhammad in the cave marked the beginning of his life as a prophet. That first revelation was followed by a second revelation. And then a third. And then a fourth. Sometimes, they would come quickly, one right after another. Sometimes, there would be breaks in between. Either way, they always left Muhammad feeling as though something intense and amazing had happened. At first, Muhammad told only his wife and his closest friends about the visions. Eventually, however, he began to share his teachings with others. Muhammad taught his followers how to pray to God and showed them how to wash before praying. Muhammad also instructed them to greet one another with peace.

More and more Meccans became convinced that Muhammad was God's true messenger. Eventually, Muhammad's work led to the start of a new religion, called Islam. It was a very difficult journey. Many members of Muhammad's tribe actively worked against him. They tried to convince people that Muhammad was scary and evil. They harassed him, his family members, and his companions. They even offered him lots of money and power, if only he would stop talking about his revelations!

But none of these strategies worked. Muhammad kept talking, and people kept listening. When the harassment became too horrible to bear, Muhammad made the difficult decision to leave his hometown of Mecca. He, his family, and his followers moved to Yathrib, the beautiful town Muhammad had visited with his mother when he was just a boy. There, he formed the first Islamic community and encouraged everyone to live in harmony with one another. Every year, during the month of Ramadan, they would fast, eating and drinking nothing from dawn to sunset. They did this to honor and remember Muhammad's first revelations – the ones in the cave that happened during that same month many years before.



This is an image of what Yathrib might have looked like when Muhammad and his family and friends moved there. Today, the city has a new name. It’s called Medina.

Many things have changed since the time of Muhammad, but those who follow the religion of Islam still honor the month of Ramadan. They fast; pray five times a day; share with those in need; and listen to the words of God, that were shared with Muhammad by the angel Gabriel.

Nowadays, Muslims think it's disrespectful to show the face of their prophets, including the Prophet Muhammad. That's why, in images, Muhammad's face is shown covered with a cloth, veil, or bright shining light.



Additional Questions

Muhammad and his grandfather loved spending time together. Do you ever spend time with your grandparents?

Muhammad's father died before he was born, his mother died when he was a young boy, and his grandfather died a few years later. Have you ever known someone who died? Or maybe you had a pet that died?

It's very sad when someone we love dies. And, it's OK to be sad. But, usually people feel better after a while. What kinds of things helped you feel better when you experienced a death in your family?

There are two special places mentioned in this story – the Kaaba, which housed statues that were sacred to the people in that time and place, and the cave where Muhammad would go on retreat. Is there a special place in your life? Maybe it's a place where you go with your family? Maybe it's a place in nature? Or maybe it's just your own quiet space where you can relax or calm down?

In this story, God offered his revelations to Muhammad through the angel, Gabriel. What do you think about that idea? Do you believe in angels? Have you ever seen an angel? How did you know it was an angel?

Muhammad and his family and his friends all experienced a lot of bullying when people didn't agree with their ideas. Have you ever experienced bullying or known someone who experienced bullying because of who they were, how they looked, how they acted, or what they thought? What can you do when you, or someone else, is being bullied?

When the bullying became too awful, Muhammad and his family moved away from Mecca. Have you ever moved before? Were you happy or sad (or both) about moving?

During Ramadan, many Muslims eat and drink nothing from very early in the morning until the sun goes down. When you decide, on your own, not to eat or drink, it's called "fasting." Usually, only teenagers and grown-ups fast but, sometimes, younger kids try it just for a little while. Have you ever tried to skip eating or drinking before? What was it like? (Or, what do you think it would be like?)